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Feeling/being 'Out of Place': Psychic Defence Against the Hostile Environment --Manuscript Draft--

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Abstract:	<p>What is it like to be an immigrant worker in a "hostile environment" in the UK? How does the form of discursive environment, which produces immigration as a social epidemic, impact on an immigrant worker's experiencing of their cultural (dis)localities and subjectivity? In this paper, I draw on my personal, psychoanalytically-informed voice to explore into these questions, by foregrounding the materiality of the hosting environment as the place in which the present relational matrix takes place, in which the internal dynamics of object relationships are lived in the present sense, and idiosyncratic expression of selfhood assumes forms.</p> <p>The materialised reality of the place matters not least because it is drenched in power relations but also as it is where an immigrant worker seeks dwelling. The hostile host, in this sense, not only produces immigrants as its guests (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000), but also as unwelcome yet persistent guests to be yoked to their place of otherness and inferiority. By presenting vignettes of my encounters with the Home Office, I call into questions the existential conditions of the immigrant worker and the potentiality for object-relatedness on relational grounds problematically punctured by hostile rhetoric. Could an immigrant's sense of locality ever be anything but, evoking Said (2013[1999]), "out of place"? To address this, I will explore into "out of place" as not simply an emotional, lived experience, but also a state of being that is embodied, psychically worked on, and strategically evoked in resisting the power of the hostile host.</p>
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Feeling/being ‘Out of Place’: Psychic Defence Against the Hostile Environment

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Abstract

What is it like to be an immigrant worker in a “hostile environment” in the UK? How does the form of discursive environment, which produces immigration as a social epidemic, impact on an immigrant worker’s experiencing of their cultural (dis)localities and subjectivity? In this paper, I draw on my personal, psychoanalytically-informed voice to explore into these questions, by foregrounding the materiality of the hosting environment as the place in which the present relational matrix takes place, in which the internal dynamics of object relationships are lived in the present sense, and idiosyncratic expression of selfhood assumes forms.

The materialised reality of the place matters not least because it is drenched in power relations but also as it is where an immigrant worker seeks dwelling. The hostile host, in this sense, not only produces immigrants as its guests (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000), but also as unwelcome yet persistent guests to be yoked to their place of otherness and inferiority. By presenting vignettes of my encounters with the Home Office, I call into questions the existential conditions of the immigrant worker and the potentiality for object-relatedness on relational grounds problematically punctured by hostile rhetoric. Could an immigrant’s sense of locality ever be anything but, evoking Said (2013[1999]), “out of place”? To address this, I will explore into “out of place” as not simply an emotional, lived experience, but also a state of being that is embodied, psychically worked on, and strategically evoked in resisting the power of the hostile host.

Key words:

out of place, immigrant worker, psychosocial, hostile environment

“The worldliness of living things means that there is no subject that is not also an object and appears as such to somebody else” (Arendt, 1978: 19)

“To be with the other is to be played by them [...] as much as it is to evoke parts of themselves [sic] by virtue of the actions of our own character” (Bollas, 1992: 28).

On Searching for Emotional Truth

What is it like to be an immigrant worker in a “hostile environment” in the UK? How does the form of discursive environment, which produces immigration as a social epidemic, impact on an immigrant worker’s experiencing of their cultural (dis)localities and subjectivity? This paper is an attempt to address these questions through interweaving an auto-ethnographic, reflexive voice with psychoanalytic theoretical considerations. The latter is particularly enriched by Winnicottian thinking which offers the capacious means to consider the interspace between the psychic processes and the lived, spatialised terrain in the social space. It aligns with the Bowker and Busby’s (2017) argument that a radical, nuanced re-reading of Winnicott lends itself to being “a rudimentary political theory of the subject” (p. 2). At the heart of Winnicottian subjectivity is the creative nucleus which is capable of acting as it is acted upon. The ‘I’ that does not simply ‘react’ to this or that incident, but one that responds with psychical resourcefulness in the name of *creativity* to the necessity of surviving and thriving in the social world that one co-habits with real others. By highlighting the agentic potentiality imbued within the self, my hope is to steer away from the orthodox preoccupation with the failure of the subject as lying in its perpetual combat with dependency, narcissism and disturbances. A person is not a passive register whose consciousness can only be written and over-written by cultural beliefs and discursive forces (Frosh 1999, 2010). A person may also be prompted to “guard [their] otherness in order to protect the richness in living it offers” (Eigan, 1981: 418). It would seem morally suspicious to venerate the lived experiences of social suffering as something to be treasured as a gift or endured as testimony. Instead, Winnicott’s theory, so capable of “holding the wounded subject” (Bowker and Busby, 2017: 25), invites me to venture into the experiential depth of “out of place” as not simply an emotional, affective moment, but also a state of being that is embodied, psychically worked on, and strategically evoked in resisting the power of the hostile host. To demonstrate how feeling/being ‘out of place’ might indeed be a form of psychic mobilisation, I wish to begin with Freud and *his* sandstone figures.

Objects Out There, In Here

"In a specific spatial relation to myself, on my left-hand side," Freud recounted a particular, unusual-looking scene from a recurrent dream, "I saw a dark space out of which there glimmered a number of grotesque sandstone figures." (Freud, 1909; cited in Bollas, 1992: 12) The significance of which remained for many years mysterious to Freud. To discover the meaning of a dream is a matter of chance, as Freud later saw, on a revisit to Padua after a twelve-year absence where he stumbled across the objects that had hauntingly reappeared in his dream. This chance encounter brought back vivid memories from his first visit of the place that "had been a disappointment". What he had desired to see, "Giotto's frescoes in the Madonna dell'Arena", had denied him entry due to closure on the day (ibid: 11). The sandstone figures stood on the street leading to the chapel at the specific point where he was turned back twelve years ago!

Freud did not elaborate on his interpretation of this dream. What motivated his desire to see the frescoes? Who turned Freud away and in what manner? What had kept Freud for twelve years before returning to Padua? Freud keeps us in the dark. Nevertheless, what he did reveal was that his failing to see, the meaning of the sandstone figures and that "dark space" behind them, had transformed into a "positive nuisance" (p. 11) - an acute internal unrest that partly triggered his revisit to Padua. Across Freud's object world and dream life, the sandstone figures, lodged "in specific relation to" him, are what Winnicott termed the "subjective object" (Winnicott, 1969). They are projectively filled with the subject's unthinkable thoughts and unbearable feelings so that they do not rest in static form but appear in animated, frightful appearance, sensuously haunting him both in dreaming and wakeful states.

Limits of linearity¹ sustained Freud's on-going curiosity to keep searching. Not being able to see becomes what it takes to opt out of the habitual mode of seeing. It affords the transgressive move beyond the essentialist division between subject and object into the dimensions of mutual impingement between materiality (of the place, objects, closure) and subjectivity (of self-experiencing, affect, and representation). Here, the self and the world are locked into mutual recreation through one another. Inner quests brought Freud to the eventual, fated even, physical

¹ Here we come to see how 'doubt' as opposed to certainty sponsors opportunities to discover the inextricable connections we have with things that dwell in "a network of associations full of redundancies and exuberant non-linear relations" (Crociani-Windland, 2009: 73).

1 return to the location where the stone figures stood still. There they had remained, awaiting for
2 a reunion with Freud who is now able to claim back the projective content as the true owner.
3 Freud's reflexivity released the sandstone figures from the psychic spell so they could return
4 to the state of being "a thing in itself"² (Winnicott, 1969: 711) twelve years later. Reflexivity,
5 here, in psychosocial studies, is inseparable from the ethical praxis to re-examine subjective
6 meaning-making as politically implicated (Frosh, 2019). To be reflexive, is to be
7 always suspicious of the knowledge we create.
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17 **Impingement and The Hostile Host**

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20 I first entered the land I now inhabit as an overseas student in 2012 – the year the Home Office
21 announced the Hostile Environment policy, enforced by Theresa May, then the home secretary.
22 Theresa May terrified me with her power to take away all the flavours from my food at the
23 instance of appearance, leaving a bitter aftertaste in my mouth and indigestion in my stomach.
24 Words are imbued with materialising forces and my body knows it best. Elsewhere I've written
25 about a year that I have lived in profound fear of deportation by the Home Office that would
26 have separated me from those I have relationally committed to (Fang, 2019). My presence, my
27 being here for the time being signifies their continual failure to expel me. I do not intend to
28 speak of it as triumph but survival of paranoid-schizoid destruction, but as time goes on, I no
29 longer feel certain why I want to be part of *this*, am still *here*³.
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41 The cultural space enacted by the hostile environment rhetoric promotes antagonism against
42 those whose desires to belong are felt to be inducing sickness of surfeit for the people of the
43 land. "There are millions of people in poorer countries who would love to live in Britain, and
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49 ² Winnicott's "a thing in itself" (p. 711) is essentially *a thing in its own right*. In differentiating object-relating
50 and object-usage, Winnicott (1969) refers to maturational process as giving rise to subject's capacity to
51 realistically experience and *accept* the quality of the object as being an "independent existence" (p. 712) of
52 autonomy outside of the subject, of the subject's omnipotent control. This seems to share an acute resonance
53 with the new materialist's concern of, and care for, object as independent of human subjectivity (c.f. Bennett,
54 2010). By relieving objects of its human-centred projective burden, we also "begin to *experience* the
55 relationship between persons and other materialities more horizontally, is to take a step toward a more
56 ecological sensibility" (italics original: 10).
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58 ³ Williams (2014: 128), through presenting the reader with a historically-detailed account of Anglo-German
59 diaspora, reminds us of the pendulous weight pushing and pulling a migrant in-between knowing and
60 unknowing if ever we can truly settle and for what.
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there is a limit to the amount of immigration any country can and should take” (Stone, 2016). Theresa May’s speech typifies this populist aversion to surfeit. In more extreme cases we see the projection of excess routinely materialised through the imagery of massive loads of migrants and refugees captured in movement towards the U.K border seeking dwelling; through the emotionally-charged articulations in conjuring a toxic fluidity of their presence, such as “swarm” or “flood” of migrants. The circulation and reproduction of these cultural products rely heavily on its ideological investments by the masses that there had been a balanced totality which has now been pushed towards the brink of ecological catastrophe. Hinshelwood’s (2005) psychoanalytic account of the (English) identity crisis through the global redistribution of power shows us how loss in a national sense can generate melancholic dynamism of clinging onto the lost object of sovereignty and grandiosity at the collective level (see also Henderson et al., 2017). This form of ideological investments speaks of future in the terms of crisis, the past in the terms of nostalgia. But an immigrant, like myself, no matter when we join the land, is always positioned as intruding upon the moment leading towards the crisis end. Irrespective of the historical time by which we arrive, like the Palestinian owner of the kebab shop around the corner who has been there for twenty-years, we can never be seen as a part of that ‘mystical past’ when everything used to be better but of a parallel reality when everything is always deteriorating (I will return to this).

It is tempting to address the hostile environment as purely a cultural space, but my intersecting a personal voice with a theoretical one comes from a wish to reveal how it has solidly transformed into a materialised reality upon which private lives wobble. Power does the work here. What is “invisible”, to evoke Avery Gordan (2008), nevertheless “... can harm you without seeming ever to touch you.” (p. 3) Materiality matters here not least because our lived, everydayness is drenched in power relations of the social world but also as it concerns the issue of objectification of ‘things’. The hostile environment policy reflects the public appeal: the overall attitudes of British views “are not favourable towards immigration and a substantial majority would like immigration to be reduced” (The Migration Observatory, 2018). When asked reduction by how much, one in three (32.2%) would prefer “reduced a lot”. Furthermore, “British people make clear distinctions between types of migrant with the highly skilled preferred to the unskilled, and those from culturally close countries (such as Australia) preferred over those from countries perceived to be more culturally distant (such as Nigeria)” (ibid). That does not help. I am skilled by virtue of visa category but culturally distant by virtue

of cultural origins. Hostile environment not only reduces immigrants to categorical boxes but also to an object of the most essentialist form – a number to be cut down for political gain.

The hostile host, in this sense, sees its immigrant guests as parasitic nuisance (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000) to be yoked to their place of otherness and inferiority – unwelcome guests that are perpetually at their host’s mercy to remain or be chunked out. This can be seen as reflected through the harshening of the notoriously changeable immigration rules for those who wish to claim permanent settlement by virtue of their affiliation with the country. The enforcement of the Family Migration Rules in 2012 for non-European Economic Area (non-EEA) nationals is such an example (The Migration Observatory, 2016). To claim a space as a family member, the duration of the time I have spent here does not matter, nor does my engagement to my British partner – unless he can meet the restrictive income requirement to be my eligible ‘sponsor’ and unless we intend to marry in six months (during which ‘the sponsored’ is not permitted to work and yet so much of my identity is based around being a professional woman!). Because of this, my political arrangement has been to remain an immigrant worker to be sponsored by the employer who periodically renews her permit to remain. By refusing to objectify love, we defy, in the Lacanian language, the imaginary of love as something that can be “perfectly regulated” (Frosh, 2010: 27). How does one prove love? Affection and intimacy can only be kept alive through bringing into our relations also the ordinary destructiveness and irrationalities. The testability of love concerns the performativity of affection. Yet, when the private matter becomes “drenched soggy in suspicious atmosphere framing the hostile environment” (Fang, 2019: 390), how do we “love without destroying by hate” (Fairbairn, 1952: 49); particularly, the potential of hate, such as an argument or a fight, to arouse suspicion towards the authenticity of love.

Winnicott, whose work foregrounds object-relations, draws emphatic significance on environment as imbued with potential for self-discovery and self-formation through the child’s creative interplay between, and indeed in-between, the internal and the external spaces. Environment, to Winnicott, is first constituted by intercorporeality with the maternal body (Honneth, 1995) that saturates the baby’s very awareness of the self⁴. Intercorporeality is made

⁴ This infantile ‘self’ should not be read as the self concerning the social construction of identity, but a “bodily ego” based on the somatic events whose awareness of the outside a mere reflection of its introjective and projective processing (Grinberg and Grinberg, 1974: 502)

other potential relational possibilities between host and different cut off moments of re-accommodation.

possible through two maternal functions: firstly, through mother's delicate management of distance and proximity towards the baby; secondly, through mother's availability to serve as an identificatory, affectable object into which the baby safely projects unbearable feelings and bodily tensions. Intercorporeality binds mother and baby together so baby's cry of discomfort arouses a powerful urge in mother towards soothing the baby and so simultaneously alleviate the painful sensation in her own body. Drawing on Bion's (1962) work, Eaton (2011) reminds us that projective identification first serves as "a form of communication" between a baby and her mother (p. 19). The mother's willingness to identify with her baby's needs, demands and desires is what enables her to contain her baby's distress. Her 'devotion' rather than 'cleverness' (Winnicott, 1953: 94) towards her baby is what makes her a good-enough mother. Intercorporeality allows an illusory yet necessary experience of non-differentiation of the self and a nurture-giving object, necessary for its ego-strengthening function in the face of infantile precarity. To give voice to the infantile ego: "My need matters to you. I know this because you respond to it as if it was your own." A devoted mother induces in the baby a sense of security and trust in preparation for their emerging awareness of the social reality as full of exciting newness and the threatening unknown. This allows them to "discover [their] own personal life" (Winnicott, 1958: 418) as a person in their own right.

On the other hand, impingement, theorised as what cuts off the baby's experiential flow of coming into being, is a breach to such a maternal devotion. It breaks off the continuity of baby's self-experiencing by forcing into their awareness the presence and need of the other as having priority to their own. It forces the baby into reactive accommodation before they are ready for such adaptation. In Winnicott's words, it impels the baby to develop "a false life built on reactions to external stimuli" (Winnicott, 1958: 413). A psychosocial complication of the concept of impingement lends possibilities to exploring it also as a historically specific mobilisation brought into being by particular ideological investments; rhetoric can effect impinging forces that agitate the migratory body's organismic coming into contact with external, far-from-equilibrium social conditions of any hosting land. Just as too early or too excessive of maternal impingement disrupts the baby's intuitive going-on-being towards discovering their 'own personal life' (Winnicott, 1958: 418), too excessive or too relentless the

Perhaps you could at least acknowledge these possibilities here in this way rather than presenting these as universal and/or as self evident/explanatory generic Winnicottian framework which might not apply /suit for a lot of other persons/scenarios where this refiguring might not quite fit in this way.

1 intrusion of ideological assault amounts to an environmental failure with problematic
2 consequences for the newcomers. To Winnicott (1965), no baby can thrive in constant
3 experience of primitive agonies: a forced awareness of its dependence on a need-satisfying
4 object. Too early should this inevitable acknowledgement comes, the initial developmental
5 phase of preoccupation with the self is disrupted before they can move onto bringing the self
6 into a meaningful engagement with externality. A facilitative environment is one that holds the
7 baby's well-being in the centre of attention; it grounds the baby so they remain ontologically
8 orientated in weathering the affective storm brought about by the developmental tasks of
9 separation, individuation and socialisation. Equally for a migratory subject, from arriving in a
10 foreign land to seeking and settling in a dwelling involves multiple, non-linear trajectories of
11 finding and losing aspects of self-defining articulations, negotiating relational proximities
12 relating to belonging and un-belonging, and disorientating dialectics of travelling between here
13 and there, present and past - all of which are affectively charged. The facilitative environment
14 is no less crucial for enabling the migrant's settling in, gaining ontological grounded-ness and
15 trust for others, and finally and moving towards building social relations.

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29 Evoked within the Derridean ethos of hospitality, making space for 'others' concerns the ethics
30 of human relations (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000); it implies decolonialising morality to
31 undermine one's sovereignty (master of the house, or owner of the breasts in mother-baby
32 relation) in opening up a space that is *yours* as much as it is *mine*. For Derrida, unconditional
33 hospitality can never be realistically accomplished, as a country can only take in a certain
34 number of immigrants conditionally. The guest is always required to respect certain rules of
35 the host. However, their right as human beings matters too. "Without this right, a new arrival
36 can only be introduced 'in my home'" (ibid: p. 59) as opposed to "into" (p. 51) my home.
37 Unlike a guest, a parasite is an uninvited intruder, "illegitimate, clandestine, liable to expulsion
38 or arrest" (p. 59). Hospitality is the welcoming of 'the other'; it tasks the mother to allow the
39 baby to claim her breasts as partly their own, the host their land so the migrants can call it home.
40 That is, a subversion of the guest-host power relation so that co-existence within a shared space
41 can be democratically negotiated. It is in this sense that hospitality generates a meeting point
42 of the spatial, the relational, and the affective that is the *home* and the sense of *being at home*
43 (Bulley, 2017).

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Hospitality and hostility are thereby practices of relation in which identity and difference, self and other, spaces of belonging and non-belonging, home and away have been violently carved from an undeniable ontological co-existence. (ibid: 10)

1 If there was a flickering awareness of human interdependence, it is now punctured by the rising
2 anti-immigrant sentiments. The differentiation between guest and parasite is clear in theory
3 (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000). However, it becomes blurred in the UK context, where
4 there is a propensity for “the language and practice of hospitality to ‘turn’ against the guest –
5 the focus on the generosity of the host becomes a focus on the duties of the guest, and notably
6 the construction of the figure of the guest who [...] fails to fulfil his duties” (Still, 2010: 13).
7 When hospitality is withdrawn, what is left is hostility. Europe is in hospitality crisis (Bulley,
8 2017); its hostility to those who seeks dwelling (immigrants, asylum seekers / refugees)
9 mimics autoimmune functionality of a human body which attacks not only those targeted as
10 possible threat from outside but also those already admitted on the inside with a hyperactive
11 alarm against difference on nativist terms. The UK’s Hostile environment policy exemplifies
12 such a territorial vigilance and excessive *anti-bodies* with a narrowing threshold of tolerable
13 *foreign bodies* which remain suspicious regardless of the duration of their existence and
14 positive contribution. Much akin to the borderline functioning (Green, 1997[1986]), the hostile
15 host engages in the schizoid organisation of object relations that is characterised by intense
16 fluctuation of psychic states of “expansion, retraction, or both, in coping with the separation
17 (loss) anxiety and intrusion (implosion) anxiety, or both” (p. 78). The pendular tension
18 resulting in unsettledness and restlessness of the ego could be seen as arising from an acute,
19 perpetual fear of mental breakdown through “a loss of control” (p. 78). With this in mind, we
20 can perhaps see how the right-wing rhetoric of *taking back control* served as a successful
21 discursive strategy during the Brexit campaign. The borderline state signifies ego fragility,
22 propelling unending attempts to define and secure its ego-boundary by means of fortifying a
23 rigid crossing-line (hence the term ‘border-line’) in defence against the perceived perpetual
24 threat of intrusion and implosion. This seems well captured by the Home Office in relation to
25 its immigrant guests that it extends on the one hand, “an economically driven, heavily
26 conditional and largely ineffective welcome; and, on the other, “a security driven, disciplinary
27 and militarised hostility” (Bulley, 2017: 15).

52 The rigid splitting of the bad and the good objects, what Otto Kernberg (1967) sees as pivotal
53 in the borderline organisation, leads to a hyper preoccupation with its psychic frontier of what
54 to let in and expel. Preferring the term organisation to disorder, Kernberg presents us with a
55 compelling portrayal of the inner reality organised to the purpose of protecting the individual
56 from directly confronting the internal clash of unintegrated and unintegratable all-good and all-

bad introjections. (p. 666) The organisation in operation here concerns preservation of self-identity. Ambiguity can hardly be tolerated not only as good and bad are perceived as polarised forces. But as totalisation of objects into all-good and all-bad promises time and again a sense of supreme sovereignty enabled by one's total identification with the all-good objects over the unruly counterpart (Wieland, 2017). Let's "sweep them *all* away"⁵ (Sparrow, 2014). All but not some. The language used here signifies an unmistakably totalitarian conviction of certainty.

We might find it hard to disagree with Andre Green (1997[1986]) who dubs Winnicott "*the analyst of the borderline*" (p. 68). The conceptual shift from the internal-external dialectic to the interplay between the two by Winnicott brings analytic attention to one's capacity, or indeed inability, to create and make use of this intermediate space. Winnicott shows us how, in the state of borderline organisation, patients cannot move into the intermediate space as the experiential playfield. Ronald Britton refers to this as the problematical phenomenon of hyper-subjectivity (Britton, 2004): the overmuch adherence to one's subjective experience seemingly makes it impossible for the subject to suspend one's conviction of certainty and enter into the intersubjective "to-and-fro of the interaction to know what was going on" (p. 48). In other words, what is felt can only be registered as real. The subjective object *is* the objective object – the sandstone figures *are* out there to get Freud! Absence of the intermediate space affronts the subject with an overflowing sense of threat of intrusion that is perceived to be hovering near one's doorstep and so one feels to be in constant danger.

Being a Subject-Object

We seek dwelling for its generative dimensions within which intersubjective matrix of relational life takes place and unfolds. Relationality exposes the "fragile and necessary dimension of our interdependence" (Butler, 2012: 148) by exposing the hierarchically imbalanced ontological precarity. Whilst all humans share a dimension of existential precarity preceding self-reflexive acts, states of ontological precarity is acutely collapsing into the bodies of socially oppressed groups. Anti-immigration mobilisation succeeds by activating a heightened level of sympathetic sentiments on the living conditions of the deprived social-economical groups that tend to be tucked under the blanket identifier of "white working class"

⁵ The quote is from Neil Hamilton attacking the "the deracinated political elite of parasites, the bureaucrats, the Eurocrats, the quangocrats, the expenses-fiddlers, the assorted chancers, living it up at taxpayers' expense". The masses here are portrayed as the good, innocent tax-payers who has fallen victims to exploitation by the bad, parasitic counter-part in the social and political scenes.

(Bhambra, 2017), whilst little concern is shown to the absence of public solidarity towards the racially and ethnically marginalised who are forever the target in anti-immigration campaign. To this she contends,

... the racial and ethnic minorities in the UK and the US were not only recent immigrants, but also long- standing citizens, and many of them also exist in similarly precarious positions. Why was their precarity [...] not of concern within the debates? (p. 217)

The ontological precarity is exposed through the disparity of public concerns in the face of dissociative marginalization of the needs of the migratory communities by its majority counterpart. The acquisition of the status of citizenship, as Bhambra (2017) disillusions, does not make hazy the migratory traces which a migrant body has heavily dragged behind it. Irrespective of the duration of settlement, an immigrant is perceived as always intruding upon the land whose recurring sense of exclusion constitutes an undying reminder that – “you are not perceived as belonging to the history of the nation, your concerns ought not to matter in the politics of the present.” (p. 220) If acquiring the status of citizenship does not readily trigger social inclusion or rectify the systematic exclusion from political discourse, what then could be missing which bars one’s being recognised as belonging to “the history of the nation” that Bhambra speaks of?

Hannah Arendt (1978) might help us think on this further. Reversing the conventional philosophical primacy given to *interiority* concerning self-knowledge and truth, Arendt redirects attention on *exteriority* concerning appearance and superficiality. The metaphysical dichotomy between being and appearing is one to be critically questioned for the sake of coming in touch with what appears right in front of us, in the richness of display of things. Being a subject invariably coincides with one’s also being an object, the ontological plurality that a perceiver is also the perceived. To appear, in her own words, “always means to seem to others, and this seeming varies according to the standpoint and the perspective of the spectators.” (ibid: 21) Each of us a subject-object, as the term I will now use, every self-display by virtue of its “appearingness” (Arendt (1978: 2) exposes us to the social examination of our authenticity. The qualifier of authenticity is highly arbitrary; posed as a question, it comes down to the spectator’s judgement which is “immediate, non-mediated by any thought or reflection” (p. 264). That is, the differentiating device does not mull over inside-outside

1 interrelation that gives rise to complex subjectivity. It mechanistically filters through how one
2 appears as an object and its potential affective evocation. Arendt simplifies the formula of
3 judgement here from the view of the spectator – “The point of the matter is: I am directly
4 *affected*. For this very reason, there can be no dispute about right or wrong here.” (p. 265;
5 emphasis added] The absence of deliberational process speaks to the core of the spectator’s
6 reductionistic filtering through the abstraction of sameness and otherness in the midst of
7 appearances. What pleases is a matter of the object being gratifying to the senses when others
8 less so. This differentiation of the *inauthentic* bodies from the *authentic* ones by the value of
9 the surface reflects the lack of intermediate space so subjective feelings are taken as the
10 ultimate truth. Citizenship therefore does not qualify the subject on the ground of authenticity,
11 for the subject remains the same object being perceived, and, to that end, one is perceived just
12 as the same as other foreigners. The matter of authenticity calls to mind richly detailed auto-
13 biographical revelations of “out of place” by Edward Said (2013[1999]). In one account, Said
14 illustrated how the imagery of his name, the English-appearing ‘Edward’ glued to the Arabic-
15 sounding ‘Said’ perpetually betrays his sense of authenticity (Said, (2013[1999])), and how it
16 marks an inexhaustible source of his feeling out of place.
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31 When one’s sense of authenticity as a subject becomes troubled by other’s suspicion of its
32 inauthenticity as an object, how can one be anywhere but out of place? It is to this question that
33 I now turn, hoping to complicate the articulation of ‘out of place’ through my own
34 psychoanalytic reflections as a subject, as any other subjects, who is responsive to the cultural
35 systems in which one’s subjectivity is engaged.
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42 **‘Out of Place’ as a Defence Against the Hostile Host**

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45 As an immigrant worker, the “primitive agonies” (Winnicott, 1965) of my dependence on the
46 Home Office and the possibilities of being rejected have never eluded my consciousness. I
47 have been hypersensitive to tales of people who I know and of journalistic reports, such as
48 those from *The Guardian*, who published gruesome accounts of immigrants being deported, or
49 kept in detention centres as the result of their visa applications being rejected. Like many, I
50 have also been profoundly demoralised by the Windrush scandal, stunned to see how
51 disposable their bodies were on the land where they had resided for decades by the State power.
52 My sense of entitlement to my life “as lived here, in the spatio-temporal horizon established
53 by my body” (Butler, 2012b: 11) is punctured by the Home Office’s impinging clanks that
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1 should I fail to comply with one thing or another, then I put my permit at the risk of being
2 revoked. My fear of not being a good-enough baby is not of paranoiac nature but grounded in
3 a realistic concern about our shared fates at the mercy of a rejecting mother. There have only
4 been too many examples of how people have committed to no wrong and yet received a
5 deportation notice, only to find out later through juridical investigations that there had been a
6 mistake in the Home Office's system⁶. I dread to check my inbox, dreading to have the
7 mother's gaze upon me and meet its gaze – to see my face full of fears reflected back through
8 her triumphant smug smile full of hostility. For now, I keep my racialised head down
9 continuing to survive relentless ideological attacks which produce immigration as social
10 epidemic amid the roughness and callousness of the hostile rhetoric that wills me to take it
11 personally.
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22 In the face of an uncaring mother, dependency is risky (Winnicott (1968: 240). The range of
23 primitive psychic defence becomes developed and acutely deployed at the infantile stage
24 precisely because without the psychic manoeuvring against its growing awareness of the severe
25 reality, “there would be a breakdown of mental organisation” (1971: 86). Winnicott draws on
26 the child's creative mobilisation of the schizophrenic states as what provide the child with a
27 defensive protection against reality, which has been perceived as unliveable and unreliable,
28 through their imaginative creation of multiple more worlds hence help the child to attain
29 “a position of invulnerability”. (p. 87) Similarly, the hostile environment is created to
30 constitute a certain unliveable reality for those whose inauthentic bodies are marked either with
31 illegality or potential for illegality. For those bodies, the multiple vulnerabilities experienced
32 with unbearable intensity call for improvisational, creative deployment of psychic defence
33 through which the hostile reality can be mediated into one that is as much bearable as it can be.
34 If my previous account of ‘out of place’ has presented it as an affective response to hostile
35 environment (Fang, 2019) I now wish to contend that ‘out of place’ can also be one of many
36 potential defensive negotiations in relation to the realistically-perceived environmental failure.
37 To illustrate this, we shall return to Freud's sandstone figures.
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53 Early on, readers were introduced to Freud and his sandstone figures. I drew attention to how
54 little clues we were given by Freud as to what had actually happened on the day. I believe,
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58 ⁶ See Amelia Hill's (2018) report - “At least 1,000 highly skilled migrants wrongly face deportation, experts
59 reveal”, The Guardian, [https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/may/06/at-least-1000-highly-skilled-](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/may/06/at-least-1000-highly-skilled-migrants-wrongly-face-deportation-experts-reveal)
60 [migrants-wrongly-face-deportation-experts-reveal](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/may/06/at-least-1000-highly-skilled-migrants-wrongly-face-deportation-experts-reveal) [accessed March 11, 2019].
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1 nonetheless, that there is much to gain if we retell this story through attending to the ontological
2 position of the sandstone figures. As an object, it stays true to its non-human, non-organic form
3 of existence, standing still allowing themselves to contain Freud's intense, affective projection
4 evoked by disappointment on being turned down and away from what he desired to see. As an
5 object, it readily foregoes autonomy as *a thing in its own right* to identify with Freud's
6 projective content so they become an extension to Freud's subjectivity, taking in and safe-
7 keeping what the subject seeks to leave behind but could never successfully do so. What haunts
8 Freud, as we now see, is not the sandstone figures, but Freud's very own unwanted memory
9 disguised in grotesque appearance of the object. What keeps coming back, the recurrence of
10 their haunting image, is what begs the subject to attend to their own unprocessed, unsymbolised
11 mental contents.
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21 "To be with the other", states Bollas (1992), "is to be played by them" (p. 28). This playing, in
22 the intersubjective sense, relies on the dynamic unfolding through projective identification and
23 through one's simultaneous being engaged as an object who is also a subject. This playing, at
24 its best, is to "evoke parts of [him or herself] by virtue of the actions of our own character"
25 (Bollas, 1992: 28) In other words, by virtue of our being real. To be with others is to partially
26 if not wholly yield to the political conditions in which the dynamic unfolding of one's coming
27 into relation with others is grievously hampered by the collective actions of nationalist
28 character. The cultural practices of routine objectification of the immigrant subject, as conjured
29 by its disposability, is created so that the disappointment experienced at a national level and
30 the sequential castration of its sense of power beyond endurance can be projected into the object
31 of the immigrant bodies – by appearance that are not only foreign but redeemably bad hence
32 blameworthy. What is good, therefore, must be seen as uncontaminatedly good.
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45 But the subject-object, despite its being treated as an object, is never devoid of awareness of
46 its own capacity to affect and be affected. To be force-fed with what does not feel to fit one's
47 character is sickness-inducing beyond endurance. The projection may have been forceful, but
48 one with which I, as a subject, struggle to identify. My political agency as someone who not
49 only responds but also acts as a subject-object manifests as an ongoing endeavour to resist
50 being pinned down to one's place – a place of single locus of identificatory submission that
51 Freud's sandstone figures were able to tolerate as a *subjective*-object. It would then seem that,
52 perhaps, being out of place can be seen as a refusal to play one's part in the mutual process of
53 projective identification; a psychic improvisation so that one remains in constant movement of
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1 wiggling out of one's place that has been pre-defined against the will of the subject. Out of
2 place, in other words, as a perpetual hesitation to be part of what feels to be at odds with one's
3 subjectivity, allows the subject to de-objectify itself – to reassure its humanness as someone
4 who feels and acts rather than something which receives and contains in a static rigidity. Out
5 of place, understood this way, may be seen as imbued with political initiative to defy unethical
6 identification with the oppressor or the homogenously-constructed oppressed. A perpetual
7 preoccupation with one's "neither-nor-ness" against being owned by either that fails to capture
8 its beauty of complexity.
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16 Referring to his work with six years old child, Bob, Winnicott was specific in naming the
17 traumatic consequences of environmental failure in the order of
18 "disintegration, disorientation, depersonalisation, falling for ever, and loss of sense of real and
19 of the capacity for relating to objects" (1971: 87). It is beyond the scope of my investigation to
20 elaborate more fully upon the developmental sequence of such in the problematic context of
21 settling down as a newly arrived immigrant. I believe that what Winnicott has named here is
22 of great use for my argument that disorientation should indeed be placed before
23 depersonalisation. Whilst I am unwilling to equate disorientation with the defence of out of
24 place, as the latter in my argument amplifies the agentic potential of the subject, it chimes with
25 my concern that to identify with, and therefore take in, the other's projective contents of
26 irredeemable badness requires nothing but a complete depersonalisation – a psychic killing of
27 the subject's subjectivity so the subject is now, only and purely an object. An unreflexive
28 container obstructed from coming into meaningful relation with the surrounding world.
29 Winnicott (1969), who once said "something of the subject is found in the object, though
30 enriched by feeling" (p. 712), sees psychoanalytic progress as lying in the self's growing
31 reflexivity and capacity to own the projective content once lodged in the Other. At the end of
32 his work with Bob, he observed that, "I was emerging (for him) out of the category of subjective
33 object, or dream come true." (1971: 88). Insight emerged for Freud when the recurrent dream
34 of sandstone figures became undone by the dreamer's encounter with the objects where they
35 stood as they were. We - immigrants as lodged in specific relation to its 'native' counterpart -
36 too wait, for the day when we can emerge out of the category of subjective object – to become
37 real and be perceived more realistically as humans with vices as well as virtues.
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